

AN OLD SOLDIER

By Mary Gertrude Sheridan
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"If I only had a gun!" sighed old Rufus Thwaite drearily.

"What would you do with it if you had, grandfather?" inquired little Ned Rogers.

Ned was a neighbor's boy and no relation whatever to his aged companion. Everybody in the neighborhood called Mr. Thwaite grandfather, however. They were in fact more friendly and indulgent than those who had a right to do so.

"I'd go to war," replied the old man with vehemence. "I was a soldier once in Wales. I belonged to the English army. Look here," and the rheumatic patriot sprang to his feet with unaccustomed agility, picked up a long stick and went through dimly remembered tactics of the past.

It would have been ludicrous if it was not sad. For ten years his married granddaughter and her husband and their family had simply tolerated their aged relative as a helpless, witless old man.

They felt bitter toward him because he had lost several thousand dollars in securities, which constituted his sole resources and which they expected to inherit.

One day in the long ago Mr. Thwaite had gone to the city to see the sights. He was missing for three days and then the Allertons received word that he was in a hospital, having been run down by a street car.

They had brought him home to find that he had suffered a broken arm and almost a total lapse of memory. They could not find his precious securities. He had not even a list of what they were. They decided that he must have taken them to the city with him and lost them. He could not remember.

Then they began to neglect him. They put him in a small, dark bed-

room over the kitchen, made him take his meals there, and, lonely and cold though he might be, never invited him into the better part of the house.

For about a month the old man had become greatly interested in the war. Every afternoon after school Ned Rogers brought the morning newspaper from home and he and the old man would go up to the wretched room and he would read to him for an hour, all war news.

"See here, Ned," spoke Mr. Thwaite just now, "I feel it my duty



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to go back to my old home and offer my services to the army."

"Why, Mr. Thwaite," exclaimed Ned, "you're too old! - Besides, that stiff arm of your. And how would you ever get there?"

"I'd try it anyhow," replied Mr. Thwaite, a dreamy expression in his eyes. "I'm pretty miserable here, Ned. The folks don't care for me. Now there was my other daughter,